PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY,

HELD AT PHILADELPHIA, FOR PROMOTING USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

VOL. XXVIII. APRIL 17, 1890. NO. 133.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECEASE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

April 17, 1890.

At a stated meeting of the Society, held January 17, 1890, Dr. Oliver offered the following preamble and resolution:

WHEREAS, It is both honorable and just that we, the present representatives of the American Philosophical Society, should show our affection and regard for our illustrious founder and first President, Dr. Benjamin Franklin, who died on the 17th day of April, 1790, be it,

Resolved, That we commemorate his life, his wisdom, his labors, and his achievements by proper and fitting ceremonies becoming such an occasion, on the 17th day of April, 1890; the form of the commemoration to be referred to a Special Committee of five members, to be appointed by the President, who shall be empowered to take all necessary action.

Which, after discussion, was adopted.

The President subsequently appointed as such Committee, Messrs. Charles A. Oliver, Henry Phillips, Jr., Arthur Biddle, William John Potts and William H. Greene.

At a stated meeting of the Society, held on February

7, 1890, Dr. Oliver reported the following preamble and resolutions, which were adopted, and the same committee continued and requested to make all the arrangements necessary to carry out the same:

The Committee to which was referred the following preamble and resolution: "Deeming it both honorable and just that we, the present representatives of the American Philosophical Society, should show our affection and regard for our illustrious Founder and First President, Dr. Benjamin Franklin, who died on the 17th day of April, 1790, be it resolved that we commemorate his life, his wisdom, his labors and his achievements by proper and fitting ceremonies becoming such an occasion, on the 17th day of April, 1890; the form of the commemoration to be referred to a special committee of five members, who shall be empowered to take all necessary action," presented by Dr. Oliver at the meeting of the Society on the 17th of January, 1890, begs respectfully to submit the following report:

Resolved, That we commemorate in a becoming manner the approaching Centennial Anniversary of the death of Benjamin Franklin.

Resolved, That a series of short addresses upon his life, character and work be delivered before the Society upon this occasion.

On the 17th day of April, 1890, at 8 P.M., the Society and its invited guests assembled at Association Hall, in the city of Philadelphia, and Mr. Talcott Williams, introducing the speakers, made the following remarks:

Mr. President and Associates of the American Philosophical Society, Ladies and Gentlemen, and last, but most honored of all on this occasion, the descendants of Dr. Franklin: Few words of mine are needed to explain the occasion of our meeting or to refer to the men who are to address you. None are necessary to recall him or the memory of his death. We assemble not to widen his fame—an impossible task—but to deepen and display our loyalty to our founder and first head. This anniversary itself falls in a week

thick sown with memory. It was but two days since that there was commemorated in this city, the anniversary which rounded out twenty-five years since the death of the first American of this century.* To-night we meet in recognition of one hundred years which have elapsed since the death of the first American of any century.

For us all the death of Lincoln still brings senses of loss for a leader taken away with his work unfulfilled, his mission unaccomplished. For none in the generation which stood by the open grave in which were buried the hopes of one section and the sorrow of both, can "the lilacs bloom with blossom of mastering odor" without thought that "the sweetest, wisest soul of all our days and lands" passed away when the task of retribution was over, and before the office of reconciliation began. To-night, as a century ago, the death of Franklin can only remind men that he left no task unaccomplished and no aim unfulfilled. In the supreme prosperity of his life nothing became him like its leaving. *Felix opportunitate mortis*, not like the Roman of old, in death escaping evil to come, but leaving countless and completed good behind. Death, for other men, lays the corner-stone of that fabric of appreciation and honor which posterity erects. For Franklin the hands of death set in place the cap-stone of the great structure which noble deeds had raised in honor, whose fame we cherish and whose shadow the descending years of a century still lengthen and prolong.

It is not our task to-night to magnify his deeds or add to his praises. In the presence of a career like his, eulogy is an impertinence and praise presumption.

* The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's death was celebrated in Philadelphia by the delivery by Walt Whitman of his address on the subject, April 15, 1890.

We assemble but to ratify and record the final judgment of a century. One hundred years ago, when this Society called upon one of its members to commemorate his life among them and his labors for man, it was possible to ask of a single speaker* to express the world's estimate of Benjamin Franklin. To-night that great monument of his achievements which death completed when no man's effort could add aught to it, has cast so broad a shadow across one hundred years, that no one, however able, can compass its breadth within the circumference of his intellectual horizon. Along whichever of the many paths that Franklin traveled to greatness, lesser men may wearily plod to-day, each is still aware, however high he may ascend, that his experience is too narrow and his vision too short to know and survey all the field of Franklin's achievements in the past or their fruits in the present. One hundred years ago, we heard one speaker; to-night we listen to five. For this occasion this Society has summoned here the biographer of Franklin; it has called upon the historian of the land in which he served his country abroad; upon the man of science; upon one both the man of science and letters, and lastly, to represent the civic and associated acclivities in which Franklin was engaged, upon the President of this Society. From this jury, thus constituted, presenting the garner of all the manifold fields which Franklin sowed to rich fame for himself and richer harvest for others, we hear summed up to-night the verdict of the century. This finding, which but ratifies the earlier presentment made by that greater jury which includes the civilized world,

*After the death of Franklin, Dr. William Smith was appointed by the American Philosophical Society to pronounce a eulogy upon the founder.

will have its full and ultimate record in the volume which this Society will transmit to learned societies through the world. It will give the acts and the character which have placed Franklin alone in all history as the one man who inspired the enthusiasm of France and satisfied the sober judgment of the English-speaking race—the solitary and unique figure in our history or in any history whose work and fame and name is alike honored, cherished and loved by the two opposing streams whose conflict is the history of twenty human centuries—the Latin and the Teuton.

Many biographers have emulated the record in which Franklin, all too briefly, told the story of his early life. We have to-night with us the only one of these biographers who has set in life and light those dreary past Revolutionary years, when as in those now passing and passed the high tide of war had ebbed and uncovered endless corruption when, as to-day, the State must be served and saved, if served and saved at all, while the clash of party and the din of faction drowned the nobler voice of principle. In describing that period when the hands of Franklin guided to its last, its final, its eternal abiding place the corner-stone of constitutional liberty, and all the morning stars of heaven sang together with joy as the pillars of organic law arose above the foundations of freedom, our historian has described the character and achievements of Franklin in a passage which will be cherished and remembered with the like utterances of Jeffrey and of Mackintosh; of Brougham and of Brancroft. He resumes to-night the task which he there began. I need not introduce, I need only present to you, the youngest and most widely read of American historians, John Bach McMaster, who will give you

A Short Biography of Benjamin Franklin.

Benjamin Franklin began his career, at Boston, as the youngest son in a family of seventeen children. The day of his birth was January 6, 1706. But, long before he died, the Gregorian calendar came into use in the English colonies and changed the date of his birth to January 17. As the boy grew up his parents attempted to determine his career. His mother was anxious to see him a minister. The boy was resolved to go to sea. The father tried hard to make him a tradesman, took him round among the carpenters and bricklayers, the joiners and the tanners to see which trade he liked the best and ended by binding him over to an elder brother to learn the trade of a printer. The apprenticeship did not long endure. The two made up an ill-mated pair. From disagreements they passed to insults. Insults led to quarrels. Quarrels to blows, and with blows they parted. The one to drag out an humble existence. The other to become the most illustrious American of his day.

Unable to find any work in Boston, Benjamin took packet for New York. Faring no better there, he crossed the bay to Perth Amboy, made the journey from Amboy to Burlington on foot, and, early one Sunday morning in October, 1723, reached this city. Here he found work and, in time, fell in with William Keith who governed Pennsylvania for the children of Penn.

Keith sent him to Boston to urge his father to buy him a press and some type. The father refused, and Keith sent him on a yet more foolish errand to London. When he set sail he believed he was to have letters of introduction and letters of credit, that he was to buy types, paper and a press and come back to America a master printer. When he reached London he found Keith a knave and himself a dupe.

His life at London forms the crisis of his career. None of the wise maxims of "Poor Richard," none of the prudence displayed in his "Advice to a Young Tradesman," none of the just principles set forth in after years in his moral essays then served to guide him. He wasted his substance. He kept bad company. He misused money entrusted to his care. He wandered from printing house to printing house, thought for one while of setting up a swimming school and for another while of wandering over Europe on foot. From this life he was turned by a merchant whose acquaintance he made on the long voyage to London, and who now gave him not advice but a situation. With him Franklin returned to Philadelphia, and at twenty began to keep books, sell goods and learn the secrets of mercantile affairs. He was indeed fast becoming a merchant when his employer died and he once more went back to the trade of printer.

For a time he was foreman in the shop of Samuel Keimer. But the two soon quarreled and Franklin with the aid of a friend established the "New Printing Office in High Street near the Market." From that hour prosperity never deserted him. At twenty-six he had bought out his partner, paid his debts, married a wife, and opened a shop that defies description. There were to be had imported books and legal blanks, paper and parchment, Dutch quills and Alleppo ink, perfumed soap, Rhode Island cheese, live geese feathers, Pahia tea, coffee, very good stock, and cash for old rags. Before he was forty-two he had founded one of the best newspapers, published the most famous almanac, and owned the best paying printing house in the thirteen colonies, was postmaster-general, and had written pieces which it is safe to say are the only pieces written by Americans in that age and read in ours.

And now this Yankee tallow-chandler's son, having raised himself, by a strict adherence to the maxims of "Poor Richard," from poverty to wealth, from obscurity to power, proceeded to violate one of the most often inculcated. "Shoemaker," says "Poor Richard," "stick to your last." "A rolling stone gathers no moss." "Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee." But Franklin now sold his shop, his newspaper, his almanac, and gave his time to the study of science. So well was the time spent that, before he was fifty, he had made discoveries and written papers that made him world-famous, secured for him membership in the Royal Society of London and won for him the Copley medal.

While the whole scientific world were thus doing him honor, he suddenly abandoned his studies, went back to politics and was once more loaded with public duties. His townsmen elected him Assemblyman. The home government appointed him Postmaster-General of the colonies. The Assembly sent him with its Speaker to hold a conference with the Indians at Carlisle; then to the Albany conference where he presented his famous Plan of Union; and then to represent the province in England.

The five years he now passed in England were the closing years of what is commonly known as the French and Indian War, but what might with more fitness be called the struggle for expansion. On his return to Philadelphia, in 1761, he seems for a time to have thought of quitting politics, living at his ease, building a fine house, studying electricity and writing a book on the "Art of Virtue." But the conspiracy of Pontiac, the massacre of the Conestoga Indians by the men of Donegal and Paxtang, and the bitter pamphlet war that followed drew him again into politics. Once more he entered the Assembly, became the leader of the Antiproprietary party, and, having

lost his seat in the bitter contest that followed, was a second time sent to represent the colony at London. His business was to present a petition to the king asking that Pennsylvania be taken from the Penns and made a royal colony. But he had not been there many weeks when the Stamp Act passed, the contest for independence began, and, in the exciting times that followed, the petition went unheeded.

Having little to do, Franklin now passed his time in writing pieces on American affairs for the English newspapers, and in defending in many ways the cause of the colonies. It was during these years that he republished a London edition of the "Farmer's Letters," that he brought out "The Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of Boston," that he sent over the "Hutchinson Letters," and underwent the memorable examination before the Privy Council.

For the part he took in the Hutchinson affair he was deprived of his place in the post-office and was soundly abused by the English press. In the midst of this abuse parliament passed the Boston Port Bill, the Massachusetts Bill, the Transportation Bill and the Quebec Act; the first Continental Congress met and the revolution began in earnest. As the news of each act of resistance came over, the position of Franklin became daily more dangerous and unpleasant. For a time his work seemed ended. He shunned the court, went no longer to the houses of the ministers and kept away from the office of Lord Dartmouth. Indeed, he was about to come home when news that Congress was to meet detained him. From that Congress came the Declaration of Rights, and, having presented this to Lord Dartmouth, Franklin set sail for Philadelphia, March 21, 1775, and landed on the 5th of May at home.

He had been abroad ten years and six months. During

these ten years many and great changes had taken place. Old friends were gone. New faces met him on every street. The growth of the city, the spirit, the prosperity of the people amazed him. But the greatest of all changes were in his own family. His wife was dead. His daughter was married. His son, a strong loyalist, was estranged by politics. Happily, no time was given him to feel these changes, for he was instantly involved in public affairs.

The day after he landed he was chosen a member of the Continental Congress, took his seat four days later and served for fourteen months, was on eleven committees, was made Postmaster-General, was sent on one mission to Washington at Cambridge and on another to Arnold at Quebec; was dispatched, after the disastrous battle of Long Island, to confer with Lord Howe; and, in September, 1776, was sent out to join Arthur Lee and Silas Deane in France.

There he was received as no other man has ever been received. He became the sensation of the hour. Everything that he said, everything that he did, everything that he wrote was quoted and read all over France. His bust was set up in the royal library. Medallions of him appeared in the palace of the king. His face was to be seen on rings, on bracelets, on the covers of snuff boxes, hats, coats, canes were all "*à la* Franklin." Nor was his diplomatic success less noticeable. He concluded the treaty of alliance with France, the treaty of amity and commerce, negotiated loans for great sums of money, and, in 1783, signed the treaty of peace with Great Britain. In 1785, old and loaded with honors, he came back to Philadelphia. Yet his career was far from ended. The people made him a member of council and the council and assembly made him President of the State, and while President, the people sent him to the convention that framed the

Constitution of the United States. He was now in his eighty-second year and at the height of his fame. Every ship brought him letters from the most renowned men Europe could produce. Not a traveler came to America but he turned aside to see Dr. Franklin. Pamphleteers did him honor in fullsome dedications. Towns were proud to bear his name. No newspapers ever mentioned him without some grateful remark. He was the venerable Dr. Franklin, "our illustrious countryman and friend of man," "the Father of American independence." To his house came regularly the Philosophical Society, the Abolition Society, the Society for Political Education.

Thus surrounded by friends and admirers, the closing years of his life passed quietly away. He died on the 17th of April, 1790. To say that his life is the most interesting, the most uniformly successful yet lived by any American is bold. Yet it is strictly true. Our country has, indeed, produced many men who have gathered greater fortunes; who have been more successful as philanthropists; who have made greater discoveries in physics. But it has produced none who have acquired greatness in so many ways, or have made so lasting an impression on the mass of his countrymen. His face is known all over the world. His writings are to be read in every tongue. His maxims are in every man's mouth. His name is all over the United States bestowed on counties, on towns, on streets, on societies, on corporations. The lightning rod and the papers on electricity give him no mean place among men of science. The Autobiography, "The Way to Wealth," the Bagatelles entitle him to a place among our men of letters. But his success was greatest as a statesman and his name is bound up with many of the most famous documents of our Revolutionary history. Indeed, it is the only one which appears alike at the foot of the Declaration of Independence, at the

foot of the treaty of alliance with France, at the foot of the treaty of peace with England and at the foot of the Constitution under which we now live.

In introducing Mr. Frederick Fraley, the President of the American Philosophical Society, Mr. Williams said:

In all the long list of achievements which make the biography of Franklin read like the history of his country, nothing has proved more useful or lasting than the societies and associations which he established. Born in a land whose countrymen have a genius for organization, he had himself supreme aptitude for this work and was equally at home in drafting the Constitution of a fire company or of a Nation. Transmitted to his descendants in one generation after another, the exercise of a like power has given this city institutions of the highest value, the last of which, of the utmost importance to a manufacturing city, owes its origin and success to one of his descendants, whom sex and sex alone debars from membership in our Society.* Of all the societies which Franklin organized, the American Philosophical Society has proved the most conspicuous, the best known in the field of science and, we may modestly believe, the most useful in the service of his and our country. I have the high honor of introducing its President, who will address you upon

*Among other institutions in Philadelphia, the Philadelphia City High School was established, in 1831, by A. D. Bache, LL.D., a grandson of Dr. Franklin, and the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art owed its foundation in 1876 and its growth afterwards, principally to the efforts of Mrs. E. D. Gillespie, a great-granddaughter of the philosopher.

Benjamin Franklin's Association with the Society.

It is difficult for me to realize that I stand here to-night as the representative of the American Philosophical Society briefly to present to you Dr. Franklin as the founder of that Society, as the spirit which influenced its life, as the one who crowned its career with the scientific honors of the day in which he lived; the Society that has endeavored to perpetuate his memory by an adherence to the principles which he incorporated in its origin and which have been faithfully, I think, preserved by his successors.

The origin of the American Philosophical Society may be traced to that junto which Franklin established in the city of Philadelphia when he was about twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, for the promotion of useful knowledge. His associates, with himself, prosecuted their studies and their deliberations with such success that it influenced, no doubt, all of their careers, but especially the career of Benjamin Franklin. He never forgot his early introduction to the kingdom of knowledge and he went on year by year with the great idea in his mind and memory that a part of his life-work was to be found in the establishment of a great Society having for its object the promoting of useful knowledge. In the year 1740 he issued his proposals for the formation of such a Society and labored sedulously for its accomplishment, sketching out the objects that it should pursue, the duties that its members should perform, their applications to science and to each other, and, aware that there must be a pilot to steer the ship and a man to keep the log, was not ambitious to be president of the Society, but took upon himself the humble office of its secretary. He performed the duties appertaining to that office with such fidelity and success that it reached a considerable point of

influence in its existence. Then the jealousy of the times and the jealousy of Franklin led to the establishment of another Society claiming part of the title of the American Philosophical institution established by Franklin and the attempt to carry on an opposition society to his, with great damage to both, and with the result that about the year 1768, the gentlemen composing those institutions, finding that both could not survive, that there was not room enough in the city of Philadelphia for two institutions of the sort—happily coalesced, and on January 2, 1769, Benjamin Franklin was elected President of the associated institutions and continued to be reëlected for twenty-one years, from 1769 to 1790, without any opposition on the part of any member of the institution.

Our friend, Prof. McMaster, has given you a brief but admirable biography of Franklin's life, telling the story of his birth, of his early education, of his trials, and of his triumphs. In his connection with the American Philosophical Society you will recognize all the traits we have seen so skillfully delineated and which have marked the institution that bears the stamp of his creative genius, which has been influenced throughout its existence by his spirit, and which to-day, as our friend, Mr. McMaster, has told you, has its correspondents throughout the whole of the world of science, has upon its list of members distinguished scientific men of every country, representatives of all the departments of science in cities of the United States, and is preparing still to go on, carrying forward the good work that Franklin founded, that has been so successful in the hands of his successors, and we are hoping that Franklin's shadow will always be within view to guide the destinies of the Society to new honors and to new triumphs.

The minutes of that early Society that he founded in 1742 are still in existence in the beautiful handwriting of the philoso-

pher, and its pages are turned over year by year by visitors to the halls of the Society; who tracing in the lines which he there wrote, realize to a certain extent the character of the man, the carefulness with which he did everything, and whether he turned his attention to the curing of smoky chimneys, or to the invention of an improved fire-place, or to drawing the lightning from the heavens and demonstrating its identity with electricity, or in proposing new theories of light and heat, or in encouraging the manufacture of large sheets of paper, or in his correspondence with the distinguished members of the Society—in all these things his connection with the American Philosophical Society illustrates the character of the man and the institutions which he founded in Philadelphia, cognating their purposes for the promotion of useful knowledge and which still remain and flourish among us in the types of the library company of Philadelphia, the old University of Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia Contributionship for the insurance of houses against loss by fire, the establishment of the first fire engine company of Philadelphia. Whether we look for him in the fields of philosophy or in the walks of business, or in works such as the framing of declarations of independence, constitutions or treaties, the admirable character of Benjamin Franklin is impressed upon every one of these things to which I have referred. And especially has his character been impressed upon the foundations, the traditions, the applications of the American Philosophical Society. That Society honors him as its founder and participates in honoring him in all those illustrations of human character to which our historian, Mr. McMaster, has referred and which have crowned our country with so much honor, with so many blessings and with such useful instruction to rising generations.

In introducing Mr. G. Brown Goode, Mr. Williams said:

American science owed its foundation and its first great discovery to a master of English style. The example of Franklin has never been forgotten by the scientific men of America. The record of their work has often become a part of the literature of their land. The clarity of their style has matched the brilliancy of their discoveries. It has been especially true of the Smithsonian Institution, which owes its endowment to the liberality of a private citizen, a liberality whose infectious example ought to attract new additions to his useful gift, that it has maintained in its registers of advancing knowledge, the dignity as well as the accuracy of science. A Henry and a Langley both remind us that the ability to make great discoveries may well be joined with the capacity to give them adequate expression. Representing a scientific institution with these traditions, Mr. Goode has come to be naturally selected to speak of the attainments of a man of science in the field of letters. With much of Mr. Goode's labors we are all familiar. The literature of our woods will never be complete without including the pages of Audubon, and the full record of our seas begins with the work of Goode. To this research, whose fruits are known to many, he has added labors in the field of early American literature whose results we hear to-night. As representing at once, organized science and literary research, I have the honor to introduce to you, Mr. G. Brown Goode, of the Smithsonian Institution, who will speak upon

The Literary Labors of Benjamin Franklin.

When the New World sent Franklin to Europe, England and France received him, without question, as the equal of their own greatest men. Lavoisier, Turgot and Raynal, Buffon, Rousseau and Condorcet were his admirers, Gibbon, Hume, and Adam Smith, Kames, Robertson, Bentham and Priestly, his friends, while to the poet Cowper praise by him atoned for all the carpings of the critics.

When he first met Voltaire, in the hall of the French Academy of Sciences, the two old men saluted affectionately, amid the tears and the applause of the spectators, and it was proclaimed through Europe that Sophocles and Solon had embraced.

His colleague, John Adams, by no means the most ardent of his admirers, said of him:

"His reputation was more universal than that of Leibnitz or Newton, Frederick the Great or Voltaire, and his character more beloved and esteemed than any or all of them. Newton had astonished, perhaps, forty or fifty men in Europe; for not more than that number, probably, at any one time had read him and understood him, and these being held in admiration in their respective countries, at the head of the philosophers, had spread among scientific people a mysterious wonder at the genius of this, perhaps the greatest man that ever lived. But *his* fame was confined to men of letters. The common people cared nothing about such a recluse philosopher. Leibnitz's name was still more confined. Frederick was hated by one-half Europeans much as Napoleon is. Voltaire was considered as a vain and profligate wit, and not esteemed by anybody, though admired by all who knew his works. But Franklin's fame was universal. His name was familiar to

government and people; to kings, courtiers, nobility, clergy, and philosophers, as well as to plebeians, to such a degree that there was scarcely a peasant or a citizen, coachman or footman, a lady's chambermaid or a scullion in the kitchen who was not familiar with his name, and who did not consider him as a friend of human kind. When they spoke of him, they seemed to think he was to restore the golden age."

In a nation of three millions, he was first in every field of action, as printer, publisher, editor, and humorist—in political economy, administration and statesmanship, in science, philosophy, diplomacy, and in literature. He stands to-day a colossal figure in the world's memory, his popularity in no wise lessened by lapse of time, and Americans still wonder at his stature, seemingly unable to measure the extent of his greatness. In Europe he is still thought the first of Americans, the most perfect embodiment of the spirit and genius of his country, and its one great writer who lived before the days of Irving.

His easy-going freedom of speech, his liberal views on theological questions and his irreverence, coupled with a certain coarseness, almost Rabelaisian, in his early writings, have lessened his popularity among educated Americans. Then, too, the subjects of which he wrote—the current political issues, the manners and morals of every-day people, common abuses and how to do away with them, passing events and their lessons, household economies, and the like—although they gave him a great popular audience, were not of the kind best fitted to call forth the admiration of his literary contemporaries.

His choice of subjects was, nevertheless, the best evidence of his preëminence. "Great men are more distinguished by range and extent than by originality. A great man does not wake up on some fine morning and say, 'I am full of life, I

will go to sea, and find an Antarctic continent; to-day I will square the circle; I will ransack botany, and find a new food for man; I have a new architecture in my mind; I foresee a new mechanic power.' No; but he finds himself in the river of thoughts and events, forced onward by the ideas and necessities of his contemporaries. He stands where all the eyes of man look one way, and their hands all point in the direction in which he should go. The church has reared him amidst rites and pomps, and he carries out the advice which her music gave him, and builds a cathedral needed by her chants and processions. He finds a war raging; it educates him by trumpet, in barracks, and he betters the instruction. He finds two counties groping to bring coal, or flour, or fish, from the place of production to the place of consumption, and he hits on a railroad. Every master has found his materials collected, and his power lay in his sympathy with his people, and in his love of the materials he wrought in." *

The spirit of the hour was Franklin's constant inspiration, and his writings were a legitimate result, the natural outgrowth of his activity in all matters of public concern. Admirable in themselves, their chief interest is nevertheless due to the fact that they form so complete a record of the deeds and the personal character of their author.

"Though he was a voluminous writer and one of the great masters of English expression, Franklin wrote habitually with a single eye to immediate practical results. He never posed for posterity. Of all the writings to which he mainly owes his present fame, it would be difficult to name one which he gave to the press himself or of which he saw the proof. Yet he never wrote a dull line nor many which the century of time has robbed of their interest or value. What-

* Emerson.

ever he wrote seems to have been conceived upon a scale which embraced the whole human race, as well as the individual or class to whom it was specifically addressed, the one evidence of true greatness which never deceives nor misleads. If he wrote to his wife, it was, more or less, a letter from every husband to his wife; if to his daughter, it was a letter that any daughter would be pleased to receive from her father; if to a philosopher or statesman, there was always that in the manner or matter of it which time cannot stale, and which will be read by every statesman and philosopher with the sort of interest they would have felt had it been addressed personally to them." *

The gathering of "Frankliniana" has become of late years a favorite pursuit of book lovers, and there are many excellent private collections besides the magnificent assemblages of his printed books, manuscripts and imprints in the public libraries of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. The pioneer in this movement was Prof. Justin Winsor, who, in 1869, established a Franklin Alcove in the Boston Public Library, for the reason, as he said at the time, "that Franklin is to Boston what Shakespeare is to England."

A complete library of Frankliniana, including not only the books by him and about him, but also the products of his press, would embrace nearly two thousand separate units. Such a collection would possess a very great value in money. †

Several bibliographies of Franklin have been printed. One

* Bigelow's Preface to Franklin's Works.

† One of his imprints, the translation of Cicero's "Cato Major," in good condition, has sold for $200. A complete series of "Poor Richard" would be almost priceless. Of the twenty-six numbers, the Pennsylvania Historical Society had, when Ford's book was printed, only sixteen; the Lenox Library, seventeen; the Library Company of Philadelphia, twenty-one; the Congressional Library, thirteen; and the American Philosophical Society, one, which, however, is the first. Of the issues of 1734 and 1735 none are in the possession of any of these libraries.

of the most serviceable is that of Sparks in the latter part of his tenth volume. Another is the admirable one of Lindsay Swift, printed seven years ago by the Boston Public Library. The latest and fullest is the "Franklin Bibliography," of Paul Leicester Ford, a very stout octavo volume of nearly five hundred pages, which is intended mainly for the collector and is a minute and exhaustive catalogue of the variations of every possible bibliographical unit.

In this are cited nine hundred and ninety-seven titles, arranged as follows:

Of the six hundred titles given by Ford in his list of books wholly or partly written by Franklin, there are only about ninety which represent distinct efforts of authorship, even though prefaces, notes in books written by others, and broadsides be counted. The remaining titles relate to reprints, advertisements, and hypothetical publications of which no copies are known to exist.

Franklin's literary remains may be classified as follows:

1. The Autobiography—from 1706 to 1757.
2. Poor Richard's Almanac, in twenty-six annual issues, 1732–58, culminating in "Father Abraham's Speech at the Auction."
3. Essays upon Manners, Morals and the Science of Life, including the so-called Bagatelles, in all sixty titles or more.
4. Tracts and Papers upon Political Economy, Finance, and the Science of Government; in all about forty titles.

5. Essays and Tracts, Historical and Political, concerning the American Revolution and the events which immediately preceded and followed—1747-1790.
6. Scientific Papers—from 1737-1790; in all 221 titles and nearly 900 pages, octavo.
7. Correspondence, Diplomatic, Domestic and Literary—1724-90; in all, some twelve hundred letters, while many still remain unpublished.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

The autobiography, prepared between the ages of sixty-five and eighty-three, is one of the most remarkable books ever written. It was intended for his son, and certain intimate friends, and was not published until after the death of its author, and was never printed as it had been written until a few years ago, when, in 1874, Mr. John Bigelow issued a correct version from the original manuscript, which by marvelous good fortune had fallen into his hands, while Minister at the Court of France.

The autobiography has passed through at least one hundred and seventy editions, and has been translated into German, French, Danish, and Spanish.

To understand it properly, the reader should use Bigelow's edition and none other—for its editor, with admirable skill, has supplemented Franklin's own narrative, complete in itself up to 1757, by a series of extracts from his letters and other writings, so that it is told in the philosopher's own words, and is complete almost to the day of his death.

During the twenty-eight years of his residence abroad, from 1758 to 1785, he was in constant correspondence with the governments he represented, and with his friends, who were numerous and to whom he wrote at length and with great freedom.

"To his protracted expatriation," writes Bigelow, "we owe

this fact, that there is scarcely an important incident in Franklin's life which is not described by himself in his memoirs, or in his correspondence; and it is to this vast treasury of sterling English, which seems to have been almost miraculously preserved from incalculable perils by sea and by land, that the legion of his biographers have been indebted for what has most contributed to render their writing attractive.

"I am not aware that any other eminent man has left so complete a record of his own life. The part of which, from the nature of things, could not be preserved in correspondence —his youth and early manhood; his years of discipline and preparation—has been made as familiar as household words to at least three generations, in those imperishable pages which, in the full maturity of his faculties and experiences he prepared at the special instance of his friends, Le Veillard, Rochefoucault, and Vaughan. From the period when that fragment closes until his death, we have a continuous, I might almost say, a daily record of his life, his labors, his anxieties, and his triumphs, from his own pen, and written when all the incidents and emotions they awakened were most fresh and distinct in his mind.*

THE ALMANAC.

Franklin's Almanac is interesting in itself, but far more so in its effects on the history of American letters and American life. It was the beginning of our American periodical literature, the first successful serial, the pioneer of the great army of magazines and reviews which, even now, stand in the place of public libraries to the great majority of our people.

Franklin's was not a monthly, or even a quarterly; it was an annual magazine of instructive and entertaining literature.

*"Life," p. 6.

He was the most experienced of American journalists, the editor and principal contributor of the *New England Courant*, when, in 1723, it threw Boston into tumult, and, in 1729, founder of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, for more than half a century the leading newspaper in the New World. He fully appreciated the possibilities of periodical literature in America and established, in 1741, a monthly called "The General Magazine and Historical Chronicle for all the British Provinces in America," * an effort which failed because the country was not yet ready.

The Almanac was to the people of that day, what the weeklies and monthlies have become to their great-grandchildren. Franklin began to print it in 1732, and it soon became a necessity in every household from New England to the Carolinas, and made the name of "Poor Richard" famous all over the world. Within twenty-five years, at least a quarter of a million copies of this treasury of homely wisdom had been distributed throughout the colonies.

Franklin wished that his Almanac should be a vehicle for conveying instruction among the common people, who bought scarcely any other books. He, therefore, filled all the little spaces between the remarkable days in the calendar with proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality as the means of procuring wealth and thereby securing virtue; "it being," as he said, "more difficult for a man in want to act always honestly than it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright." Finally he brought together in a connected fabric, all the best of the sayings of Poor Richard for twenty-five years, in the form of the harangue of a wise old man to the people attending an auction. "Father Abraham's Speech," "The Way to Wealth," or "La Science du Bonhomme

* Six numbers of this periodical were printed.

Richard," as this composition was variously called, touched by its simple wisdom, responsive chords in the hearts of all simple-minded people.

Its influence was amazingly great. No one was better able than Franklin to judge of its extent, no one less likely to exaggerate it.

Writing about it, in 1788, he said:

"The piece, being universally approved, was copied in all the newspapers of the continent; reprinted in Britain on broadsides, to be stuck up in houses; two translations were made of it in French, and great numbers bought by the clergy and gentry to distribute gratis among their poor parishioners and tenants. In Pennsylvania, as it discouraged useless expense in foreign superfluities, some thought it had its share in producing that growing plenty of money which was observable for several years after its publication." *

Ford's bibliography shows that since it was written, one hundred and twenty-three years ago, "Father Abraham's Speech" has been reprinted about three times for each year. Seventy or more separate editions in English have appeared, fifty-six in French, eleven in German, and some in Italian. It was printed in Danish at Copenhagen (1801, 1820); in Catalan at Montroulez (1820) and Morlais (1832); in Greek in Paris (1823); in Dutch at The Hague (1828); in Portuguese in Paris (1828); in Bohemian at Teshen (1838); in Welsh in London (1839); in Spanish at Caracas in Venezuela (1858); in Russian at St. Petersburg (1809), and in Chinese at Peking (in 1884), as well as in Polish and the phonetic characters.

Ford is quite justified in saying that it has been oftener printed and translated than any other book from an American pen.

* Autobiography, Bigelow edition, i, 250.

Franklin's essays represented his most finished work. Among them indeed are the only compositions written with a distinctly artistic purpose. Many years after his death a small, thin portfolio was found among his papers. On its cover was written "BAGATELLES," and within were fifteen or more of his own favorite essays. These were prepared for the entertainment of that brilliant circle of friends in Paris, in whose meetings the venerable author took so much delight. Among them were many of his most graceful and witty productions —such as "The Morals of Chess," "The Dialogue between Franklin and the Gout" and "The Ephemera."

The Bagatelles were written when he was over seventy. In some of his satires, half a century earlier in date, as for instance "The Speech of Mistress Polly Baker," he exhibited equal force and skill, though a wit less mellow and refined and a style less polished through familiarity with French literature.

His essay writing began when he contributed to his brother's newspaper in Boston a series of satirical letters signed "Silence Dogood"—which are highly praised by those who have read them. "So well," says McMaster, "did the lad catch the spirit, the peculiar diction, the humor of his model, the *Spectator*, that he seems to have written with a copy of Addison open before him."

Seven years later he prepared for a Philadelphia newspaper, *The Mercury*, a series of essays under the title of "The Busy Body." This was his first effort in a strictly literary direction. Some admirer has described them as being written "after the manner of the *Spectator*, but more readable."

Although the critic of to-day may not fully agree with this judgment, he cannot fail to be pleased with the graceful, easy

flow of the words, and at the same time, interested in the evidences of the young printer's extensive and intelligent acquaintance with the best of English books.

After he became owner of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* he wrote for it essays in the same vein, many of which have been reprinted in recent editions of his writings.

Some of the essays were humorous or satirical, others related to religious and moral subjects and the economy of life, others still to the current events of the day. Among them was an admirable exposition of what was then known about earthquakes; and this, published in 1737, was his first contribution to scientific literature.

When he was living in England he constantly wrote for the press, and among his productions at this time were a number of papers, which although an essential part of his political writings, should also be included in that carefully-edited collection of Franklin's essays for which the world has been expectantly waiting for a hundred years. Among the best are the "Receipt for Diminishing a Great Empire," and the "Remarks Concerning the Savages of North America," written in Paris a few years later, which rank among the most brilliant of political satires.

HIS DOMESTIC AND LITERARY CORRESPONDENCE.

Franklin was the brightest and most charming of correspondents, and there is not one of his letters which is in the least degree dull or formal.

Over 1200 are printed by Bigelow, and they make up at least nine-tenths of the bulk of his literary remains. Many of them are little essays, and should be included in every edition of his short papers. In no connection are they more

readable than as arranged by Mr. Bigelow* to form a part of the autobiography. "To be fully understood and appreciated," writes Bigelow, "they (as well as all the rest of his writings) should be read in chronological order and by the light of current events, for every one of them was as much the product of its time and circumstances as the fruits and flowers of a garden are of their respective seasons."

Though the signature is always "B. Franklin," the writer is sometimes the statesman, sometimes the shrewd, practical tradesman, sometimes the philosopher, sometimes the inventor concerned with mechanical details—now the philanthropist, now the wily diplomat, again the loving husband and parent, interested above all things in the affairs of his own little family, again the brilliant man of the world, gossiping with Madame Helvetius or the Abbé Morellet.

"His letters," said John Foster, "abound in tokens of benevolence, sparkling not unfrequently with satiric pleasantry, but of a bland, good-natured kind, arising in the most easy, natural manner, and thrown off with admirable simplicity and brevity of expression. There are short discussions relating to various arts and conveniences of life, plain instructions for persons deficient in cultivation, and the means for it; condolences on the death of friends, and frequent references, in an advanced stage of the correspondence, to his old age and approaching death. Moral principles and questions are sometimes considered and simplified; and American affairs are often brought in view, though not set forth in the diplomatic style."

It would seem impossible that the man who wrote at times so seriously and devoutly could have been also the author of the so-called "Suppressed Letters." Between the ages of fifteen

*Bigelow's "Franklin," i, p. 21.

and eighty-five, however, a human character has time for many transformations.

TREATISES UPON POLITICAL ECONOMY.

At the age of twenty-three, in 1729, Franklin published his "Modest Enquiry into the Nature and Necessity of Paper Money"—perhaps the earliest treatise on finance and currency written in America.

This pamphlet was written at a time of public crisis, and for a definite purpose, which was successful. It was the first of a series of political essays, published from time to time in the sixty-two years of life which remained to its author—each with some useful end in view, and each without exception productive of some definite result.

Edmond Burke was wont to say that when Franklin appeared before the British Parliament, he was like "a master examined before a parcel of school-boys," and Charles Fox declared that the ministry on that occasion "were mere dwarfs in the hand of a master."

Persuasive and convincing as were his spoken words, the power of the man was even more evident when he took up his pen to write upon topics of public interest. His political papers, however, have little meaning at the present time except to students familiar with the history of the days to which they belong, though read in connection with the story of his life they have a very great interest of their own.

In 1751 appeared "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind and the Peopling of Countries"—to which it would appear that Adam Smith in later years was indebted for suggestions, and which led Malthus to write his great "Essay on Population."

Franklin wrote other useful treatises, "On the Laboring

Poor," on "The Principles of Trade," on "Luxury, Idleness and Industry," on war, privateering and the Court of the Peers, and many kindred topics. None of his economical treatises were so original or so influential as the two which were first written. The last in the list, however, "On the Slave Trade," although finished only twenty-four days before his death and at the age of eighty-five, is as full of vigor and fire as his best efforts of a quarter of a century previous. It contains the speech of Mehemet Ibrahim in the Divan of Algiers, which Lord Jeffrey declared was not surpassed by any of the pleasantries of Arbuthnot or Swift.

POLITICAL WRITINGS.

Franklin's first political treatise was written in 1747.

The war between Great Britain and France, which was at that time in progress, was thought to have brought the American colonies into great danger, and the governor of Pennsylvania anxiously labored to prevail upon the Quaker Assembly to pass a militia law and to make other provisions for the security of the province. To further this project, Franklin wrote and published a pamphlet, entitled "Plain Truth," which had a sudden and surprising effect, and resulted in a few weeks in the organization of a colonial militia of over ten thousand men. This was the beginning of the conversion of the inhabitants of Pennsylvania from the Quaker doctrine of submission to that of defensive warfare, and had a most important influence upon the future of America.*

*Bigelow says of this pamphlet:

"Substituting the words 'United States' for Pennsylvania, it is as timely to-day as when it was written. Though we are at peace with all nations, we have many times as many lives and many times as much property exposed, while our defenses are relatively inferior to those which Franklin denounced nearly a century and a half ago as unpardonably deficient" (Bigelow's "Franklin," Vol. ii, p. 39).

"Plain Truth" was followed by several other tracts in relation to the struggle between Pennsylvania and the Proprietary Government in the hands of the Penn family. The most influential was that called "Cool Thoughts on the Present Situation of our Public Affairs," printed in 1764, which was a masterly argument in favor of a change from Proprietary to a Royal Government.

During his residence in England before the Revolution, and in France during its continuance and afterwards, Franklin wrote much. One of the most important of his early papers was that printed in London in 1760, entitled "The Interest of Great Britain in Regard to Her Colonies," a protest against the proposal that Great Britain should give up Canada to the French, and receive instead the Island of Guadaloupe in the West Indies.

So strong a paper was this that Burke, in replying to it, said of its author: "He is clearly the ablest, the most ingenuous, and the most dexterous of those who have written upon the question, and we may therefore conclude that he has said everything in the best manner that the case would bear."

These, however, together with his more extensive treatises upon the condition of affairs in the new Republic, belong to the statesman Franklin, rather than to Franklin the man of letters. Together with his diplomatic correspondence they make up fully half of his published works.

SCIENTIFIC WRITINGS.

Franklin's scientific writings were voluminous. Sparks reprinted 63 papers on electricity, filling 302 pages, and 157 on philosophical subjects, making 578 pages—in all 220 letters and 880 pages—which is a remarkable showing for a man so constantly occupied with private and public business.

His scientific papers are written in a style peculiar to their author—lucid, convincing, never wearisome. "A singular felicity of induction guided all his researches, and by very small means he established very grand truths. The style and manner of his publications on electricity are almost as worthy of admiration as the doctrine they contain. He has endeavored to remove all mystery and obscurity from the subject. He has written equally for the uninitiated and for the philosopher; and he has rendered his details amusing and perspicuous, elegant as well as simple. Science appears, in his language, in a dress wonderfully decorous, best adapted to display her native loveliness. He has in no instance exhibited that false dignity by which philosophy is kept aloof from common applications; and he has sought rather to make her a useful inmate and servant in the common habitations of man, than to preserve her merely as an object of admiration in temples and palaces." *

Perhaps the most judicious estimate of Franklin's qualities as a man of letters is that by John Foster in the *Eclectic Review* for 1818.

"It is unnecessary to remark," he writes, "that Franklin was not so much a man of books as of affairs; but he was not the less for that a speculative man. Every concern became an intellectual subject to a mind so acutely and perpetually attentive to the relation of cause and effect. For enlargement of his sphere of speculation, his deficiency of literature, in the usual sense of the term, was excellently compensated by so wide an acquaintance with the world and with distinguished individuals of all ranks, professions and attainments. It may be, however, that a more bookish and contemplative employment of some portion of his life would have left one deficiency of his mental character less palpable. There appears

* Sir Humphrey Davy.

to have been but little in that character of the element of sublimity. We do not meet with many bright elevations of thought, or powerful, enchanting impulses of sentiment, or brilliant, transient glimpses of ideal worlds. Strong, independent, comprehensive, never remitting intelligence, proceeding on the plain ground of things, and acting in a manner always equal to, and never appearing at moments to surpass itself, constituted his mental power. In its operation it has no risings and fallings, no disturbance into eloquence or poetry, no cloudiness of smoke indeed, but no darting flames. A consequence of this perfect uniformity is, that all subjects treated appear to be on a level, the loftiest and most insignificant being commented on in the same unalterable strain of calm, plain sense, which brings all things to its own standard, insomuch that a great subject shall sometimes seem to become less while it is elucidated and less commanding while it is enforced. In discoursing of serious subjects, Franklin imposes gravity on the reader, but does not excite solemnity, and on grand ones he never displays or inspires enthusiasm."

Although his works fill ten stately volumes, Franklin never wrote a book for publication.

The "Autobiography" was intended solely for the pleasure of his intimate friends. The sayings of Poor Richard were prepared for his yearly Almanac, with purely utilitarian ends in view. His scientific discoveries were announced, with few exceptions, in letters to his friends, who printed them without his knowledge or consent.

His political papers appeared in the newspapers and reviews, in letters, or prefaces, and in occasional pamphlets. Some of his brightest and most finished essays were set up and printed by his own hand, as broadsides, on a little printing-press which he had in his apartments while Minister to France.

The matter-of-fact character of his early writings was largely due to his surroundings and to the people for whom he wrote. When at leisure in the society of cultivated people he soon yielded to their influence. His famous essay on the "Way to Wealth," for example, was written soon after his visit to Virginia and a somewhat intimate association with General Braddock and his staff. The first, and incomparably the best, part of his "Autobiography" was written at the time of his most intimate connection with English literary society and while visiting at the country home of the Bishop of St. Asaph. The witty Bagatelles were produced in the midst of a brilliant Parisian circle.

His contributions to science were the result of a period of voluntary seclusion and temporary respite from business cares which he had learned by his frugality and industry while printer and publisher.

After he had acquired literary fame, he made use of it to promote the welfare of his country. A French writer, describing, in 1872, the events of nearly a century before, said:

"The coming of the famous American to Paris caused a profound sensation. Everybody wanted to see the author of the 'Almanach du Bonhomme Richard;' his mind was compared to that of Cato, and his character to that of Socrates. Franklin knew full well how to take advantage of the impression which he had produced upon a nation so impressionable as were the French, always ready to place their lives and their wealth at the service of a noble principle, and, following the example of Lacretelle, he decided to serve as ambassador not to a court but to a free and generous people."

He was by instinct a scholar and by inclination an author. He loved books for themselves. He became a vegetarian at the age of sixteen that he might buy them.

Some one has called attention to his "remarkable affinity for superior people." His affinity for the best of books was also remarkable, and no one was ever more sensitive to their influence. In the "Autobiography" he mentions the books which, as a boy, he liked to read, and it is easy to trace the effects of each upon his subsequent life.

His literary style, though founded principally upon a thorough study of the *Spectator*, gave evidence at a very early day, of intimate acquaintance with Bunyan, Defoe, Plutarch, Rabelais and Xenophon. His philanthropic tendencies were shaped and strengthened by Cotton Mather's "Essays to do Good," and his administrative faculties by Defoe's "Essay upon Projects." Shaftesbury and Collins strongly influenced his theological opinions. Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding" moulded his habits of thought, as did also the "Memorabilia" of Xenophon.

Franklin has been called the founder of modern utilitarianism, but it is unjust and ungenerous to place this estimate upon his character. He knew the world in which he lived, and the people for whom he wrote. His aim was to produce immediate and practical results. His precepts were written for the unthinking, the inexperienced and the selfish. Poor Richard was a kindergarten teacher.

In his advice in regard to the treatment of the aged, for example, he reminded his readers that they would themselves in their own last years need care and indulgence, but he also first appealed to motives the loftiest and tenderest. Whoever studies Franklin in a generous spirit, will find no lack of generous thought and principle.

Like Socrates, Franklin estimated the value of every action by its utility. Moral utility was to him, however, the highest test of value. He believed that the promotion of universal

happiness, by the prevention or mitigation of evil, was man's highest function. "He seems," says Weems, "to have been all eye, all ear, all touch, to every thing that affected human happiness," and he died with his eyes fixed upon "the picture of Him who came into the world to teach men to love one another. On his death-bed he often returned thanks to God for having so kindly cast his lot of life in the very time of all others when he would have chosen to live for the great purposes of usefulness and pleasure."

Is there in history a more touching memory than that of Franklin awaiting the coming of death, the venerable sage, the pride and glory of his own land, the admiration of Europe, making excuses for the moanings which were occasionally forced from him by the severity of his pains—afraid that he did not bear them as he ought, while he observed his grateful sense of the many blessings he had received from the Supreme Being, who had raised him from small and low beginnings to such high rank and consideration among men.

I have already said that nothing was further from his thoughts than to obtain for himself literary fame. He took no care of his own writings, and made no effort to secure the publication of them. And still, a century after his death, he stands prominently forth as the only great literary man of America in colonial days and in the first fifty years of the Republic.

No one who has held in his hand a copy of Franklin's edition of Cicero's "Cato Major" can doubt that the man who made it had the soul of an artist. No one who has read his tender and exquisitely graceful preface to this beautiful edition can question that he had the heart of a poet, and the touch of a master of letters.

When twenty-five he founded a great public library, the earliest in America, that others as well as he might enjoy the companionship of books.

Books were always in his mind and by his side. He compared his own life to a book. At the age of eighty-three he wrote:

"Hitherto this long life has been tolerably happy; so that, if I were allowed to live it over again, I should make no objection, only wishing for leave to do, what others do in a second edition of their works—correct some of my *errata*."

His "Autobiography," written in the same spirit, noted the "errata" in its author's career with true printer's interest, as if he were scanning a bundle of proof sheets. He did not conceal them, but marked them so that all could see, frankly confessed his errors, and did what he could in atonement.

Jefferson desired that his monument should declare that he was the author of the Declaration of Independence and the founder of a great university. Franklin, in his will, sought no higher title than that of *printer*. A maker of books he had been for three-quarters of a century, and a friend and lover of literature even longer. The epitaph, written by his own hand for his tomb, which can never become trite by repetition, is full of the spirit of the great printer.

"THE BODY
OF
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,
PRINTER,
(LIKE THE COVER OF AN OLD BOOK,
ITS CONTENTS TORN OUT,
AND STRIPT OF ITS LETTERING AND GILDING,)
LIES HERE FOOD FOR WORMS,
YET THE WORK ITSELF SHALL NOT BE LOST,
FOR IT WILL, AS HE BELIEVED, APPEAR ONCE MORE,
IN A NEW
AND MORE BEAUTIFUL EDITION,
CORRECTED AND AMENDED
BY
THE AUTHOR."

In introducing Dr. J. W. Holland, Mr. Williams said:

It is sometimes forgotten in Philadelphia, and it is never remembered in Boston, that while Franklin became a Bostonian without being consulted, he employed the first exercise of his mature judgment to become a Philadelphian, and remained so to the end of his days. It is a happy coincidence that in commemorating the scientific labors of the man who, like another Prometheus, stole from heaven the vital spark which has given light to man and life to modern science, this Society has selected one of the many representatives of science in this city which it owes to the attractions it offers for a career rather than to the opportunities it furnishes as a birthplace. Dr. J. W. Holland represents an institution which has given to him, as it had before to a distinguished predecessor, the field for displaying in the East a learning and skill attained and acquired in the West. Like Dr. Gross, he has added one more to those men of mark in medicine whose work began in Kentucky, but the knowledge of whose labors is bounded by no one State. In dealing with the scientific work of Franklin, the physician is as much at home as the electrician. His great discovery in the field of the latter was more conspicuous, illuminating the ignorance of ages by a single flash of lightning. His discoveries in hygiene were numerous, useful and remain to-day serviceable. I take pleasure in introducing to you Dr. J. W. Holland, of Jefferson Medical College, who speaks upon

The Scientific Work of Benjamin Franklin.

The scientific labors of Franklin were not limited to any particular period nor any special field. Various branches of natural philosophy, in almost every year of his middle life, were illuminated by his discoveries, inventions and speculations. As an editor and man of business, science occupied part of his leisure, and in later life, when engrossed with public affairs, he sighed for opportunity to follow these favorite pursuits.

In presenting a sketch of these varied and fruitful labors, chronological arrangement will not serve so well as one based upon their general character. Looked at in this way his principal works are seen to fall into a few groups such as labors in sanitary science, in the art of navigation, in meteorology, and in electricity. It will be readily conceded that in the limits allotted this subject, it would be vain to attempt an extended analysis of all the philosophical productions of his fertile genius. It is possible, however, to give some impression of their variety and utility.

The science of maintaining health is rightly regarded as of very modern growth and even now its importance though constantly insisted on by its votaries is far from being generally recognized. The sound judgment of Franklin led him to consider it as a weighty matter whether it involved smoky chimneys or the water supply of a great city. His sanitary labors pertain to the person, to the house, and to the city. About that very common disturbance of health usually called "catching a cold," many fallacies still linger though Franklin did some forcible writing to remove the popular errors. He perceived what doctors nowadays all recognize that while among the causes of acute catarrh, exposure to cold was one, the most

important was a predisposition due to impaired strength from any cause whatever. Too little exposure to fresh air inducing depressed vitality might thus figure as a cause. His essay on this topic with some alterations would make a good sanitary tract, even after the lapse of more than a century.

It was his constant habit to try to see all things little and great just as they are, and when he spoke of them to give a truthful report. When the time came for him to resort to spectacles to correct old sight, he found that the glass which served for society would not answer for reading. Naught that interested him was he content to look upon as if in a fog. But many things must be outlined dimly unless he carried two pairs of spectacles and changed them as the occasion demanded. To obviate this difficulty, he invented what is known as the bifocal or Franklin lens, the upper half of which was adjusted to distant objects and the lower for near view, as in reading. By changing the direction of vision through this one pair of glasses an elderly artist can see equally well the landscape one moment and his canvas the next. Franklin asserted that he understood French better by their help as they enabled him, while at table to see distinctly what he had on his plate and at the same time to note the expressive facial movements of persons who sat opposite. In the hundred years no change was made from the original form until recently. Now, instead of dividing the lens in equal halves by a horizontal line, two perfectly centred lenses of different sizes are cemented together. The larger, having two-thirds the size of the entire glass, is devoted to objects beyond arm's reach, and the smaller at the bottom suffices for reading. This invention must be considered as something better than a convenience; it takes rank with devices for maintaining health. When the imperfect eye makes frequent effort to see things without properly adjusted

glasses, in sensitive persons eye-fatigue may induce various reflex nervous symptoms.

To those allied departments of domestic hygiene, ventilation and warming, he was the first one to give anything like adequate heed. On many occasions he urged the need for ventilation to prevent that personal vitiation of air indoors which depresses the energies and causes stupor and dull headache. Mr. Small, a London surgeon, credits him with being the first who observed that respiration communicated to the air a quality resembling the mephitic gases of caves, and further, that a noxious character was imparted by the volatile effluvia of persons enclosed in rooms. Franklin attached considerable importance to the use of open chimneys for the extraction of the vitiated air by the upward draught. While in London he was consulted on the ventilation of the House of Commons and recommended that the personal atmosphere surrounding the members might be carried off direct by having outlets in a part of the benches on which they sat connected with exhaust flues. The merit of the suggestion is shown by the fact that a similar provision has been introduced into the new Johns Hopkins Hospital which embodies the most approved methods of sanitary construction. Connected with the benches in the waiting rooms, and beneath each bed in the wards are grates through which the personal atmosphere passes out to the draught of a chimney.

Inseparable from the requirement of ventilation and subservient to it is that of the heating arrangements. In this matter he made a great stride by the invention of the stove that bears his name. This stove was invented to economize fuel by regulating the air supply to it and by providing large metallic surfaces for warming the air of the room. In a hundred years, from Franklin's idea many shapes have been evolved,

all traceable to the original. His name is usually given the variety provided with open grates, but there can be no doubt that the original embodied also the principles of the now widely used "air-tight" stoves to which his directions are perfectly applicable. One of the advantages claimed for the stove was that it was a refuge from the nuisance of smoky chimneys. At that time the true principles of chimney construction had not been worked out so that a perfect chimney was the exception and open fire-places not an unmixed luxury. To beguile the tedium and discomfort of a seven weeks' voyage across the Atlantic, Franklin set down his observations and recommendations and gave them to a suffering world as his famous pamphlet on the "Causes and Cure of Smoky Chimneys." Having applied his accurate eye and judgment to these common-place things and having made scientific publications of mark concerning them, he had the satisfaction of knowing that by his plans for perfecting chimneys, for getting the most heat from fuel and for securing wholesome currents of air in close apartments, he had dispelled much ignorance and enhanced the sum of human comfort.

That Franklin was foremost in all public measures, for founding a hospital, advancing popular education, lighting and paving streets, and organizing fire companies, is generally appreciated, but it is not so widely known that he took steps in his will to improve the water supply of this city. Having noticed the tendency of well water in old cities to grow gradually unfit for use, he foresaw that in time a change to a better protected source would be necessary to the public health. In his last will he provided that at the end of a hundred years, if not done before, the corporation of this city should employ a bequest in bringing by pipes the water of Wissakickon creek to the town. After a hundred years, his beloved city is con-

fronted with the same difficulty in another shape. The wells having fulfilled his prophecy have been abolished and the waters of the Wissahickon many years ago brought into service have in turn come under suspicion. What an imperial gift, if some millionaire, emulous of Franklin's example, with far greater means, should see fit to dedicate his money to provide for the people a purer drinking water, when the unfitness of the present source shall be duly recognized!

Having made eight voyages across the Atlantic at a time when it took at least a month, he had opportunities for studying the art of navigation. What he saw joined to what he learned from experienced seamen and his own wide reading lead him to inferences that have helped to master the difficulties and perils of the sea. Although early Spanish navigators were aware of the existence of the Gulf stream, so little detailed knowledge was available that up to Franklin's time the currents of the Atlantic were looked upon as hindrances rather than helps to transatlantic commerce. Franklin noticed the higher temperature marking out the Gulf stream, took many thermometric observations, and made a chart of it with a view to guide navigators in the route between England and America. He first advised that systematic use be made of the trade-winds and the ocean currents, and showed how it could be done. From the Chinese he got an idea which he was the first to urge upon the western ship-owners. He worked out the crude hint to its best form—that of dividing a ship into separate chambers by water-tight partitions so that a leak in one would not affect the others. It was not until quite recent years that this device has been put in practice with the desired results. A demonstration of its utility was seen lately in the accident that happened to the steamer *City of Paris*. Even when two of her compartments were flooded, she bore

up for four days and a half, bringing her ship's company of more than a thousand souls safely into port.

The recorded experiences of ships during the last few years have fully established the efficacy of another notion of Franklin's. Thanks to his emphatic endorsement the previously known power of oil to still troubled waters is now generally employed to smooth the breaking waves when they threaten the safety of a vessel.

The occurrence of a north-east storm of unusual violence provoked those inquiries which led to his discovery of the backward course of storms and to a theory which had a marked influence on the development of meteorology. His explanation of the Aurora Borealis as a phenomenon of atmospheric electricity was at once accepted as adequate, though in its details it has since been modified to meet the demands of advancing knowledge.

In one of his charming letters to a lady correspondent he first made note of the remarkable variation in the absorptive power for the sun's heat shown by cloths of different colors. According to his suggestions, the principle has been applied to agriculture and to the clothing of armies. Under the fostering hand of the national government during this century there has been developed from his initial inquiry in navigation the admirable work of the hydrographic office. Its pilot charts are the lineal descendants of the one Franklin drew. It is not claiming too much to say that his observations on the north-east storm were the first noteworthy contribution to the science upon which is based the predictions of the weather bureau.

The present time has been called "the Age of Electricity." To estimate fairly the significance of Franklin's electrical researches in this day of the telephone, the dynamo-engines, the electric light, and the electric railway, it must be remem-

bered that one hundred and fifty years ago not only was there no telegraph, but the magnetic, chemical and motor powers of electricity were not even dreamt of. It was fifty years before Galvani published his account of the convulsions produced in a frog's leg by the contact of dissimilar metals. Volta was just five years old. To what is now an open book full of wonders which every school-boy can read without obscurity or hesitation, naught but the preface had appeared. That preface dates from three centuries before Christ, when Thales of Miletus drew attention to the curious property of attraction developed on rubbing amber. The Greeks explained this by the theory that friction evoked the animating soul of the amber which seized upon light particles near it. For nearly two thousand years there was no substantial addition to knowledge until Gilbert discovered that glass, sealing wax, sulphur, and other substances could also be electrified. Then fifty years elapsed before a rude machine was made from which vivid sparks could be drawn. After another fifty years the resemblance between these zigzag sparks and the lightning flash was commented on. The first chapter was fairly opened when the discovery of the Leyden jar enabled the experimenter to imprison the fiery spirit and perform many remarkable tricks with it. At this time Franklin had reached middle life and retired from business with an independent fortune. He gave his scientific enthusiasm a free rein with the Leyden jar and the frictional machine. With the aid of his Philadelphia collaborators many ingenious experiments were devised. Their joint study proved so fruitful that in the course of six years they advanced the science of frictional electricity more than the rest of the world had done in two thousand.

It was this chapter which, according to Goethe, had been handled better than any other in modern times. For illustra-

tion of an admirable scientific method, let us glance at the steps of Franklin's research. First, his attention was taken with the marvels of the rubbed glass tube. These were enhanced by the storage properties of the Leyden jar. With three friends who had the same infection, he formed a coterie for mutual suggestions and encouragement. They constructed their own machines and with them made new demonstrations of attraction and repulsion, and of the power of electricity to produce light, heat, mechanical violence, nervous shock, and even death. The brilliancy of these experiments depended mainly on Franklin's discovery that the electricity of the Leyden jar was stored up on the glass, and that by increasing the extent of excited surface the energy was proportionately multiplied. The power thus obtained made it appear highly probable that the difference between the spark and the lightning flash was one of degree. Having discovered the property of pointed conductors to cause a silent and harmless discharge he next charged an artificial thunder-cloud made of Leyden jars, and with a small pointed rod conducted away its energy without noise or violence. From the truth thus established, he deduced the conjecture that sharp metallic rods fixed at the highest point of buildings would draw away quietly the charge of an approaching thunder-storm. A similar contrivance brought the atmospheric electricity within the reach of his experiments, and its identity with frictional electricity was fully demonstrated. His conjectures put to the test gave to the service of humanity the lightning-rod, accounted the most brilliant application of science that had been known up to that time.

In a hundred years, but little has been added to what Franklin revealed concerning the electricity of friction. Volta's electrophorus with his condenser and Holtz' induction

machine are the only important additions to electrostatics that have since been made. The marvelous progress of this century in the adaptation of electricity as a useful agent are developments of chemical and magnetic electricity forms unknown until after Franklin's death. His apt and simple theory of an electric fluid, the excess or lack of which caused positive and negative action, held sway for so many years that to this day its nomenclature is retained in spite of defects revealed by recent advances in knowledge. The splendid results of investigations made in our time call for a broader conception which shall include Franklinism, Galvanism, and Faradism, with those manifestations of energy at a distance which seem to place electro-magnetic induction in the same category with light and other radiant forces.

But Franklin's fame as a philosopher who worked for the improvement of man's estate shall remain amid all the theoretical changes of the future. It shall remain because it rests upon the enduring truths he first laid bare; because it was builded with sound inductive methods; because it is guarded by the grateful memories of mankind. Cheerfully then let us commemorate the day of his death. It was the day when his intelligence should at last be released from "its muddy vesture," when, as he expressed it, he should be free to roam through some of the systems Herschel has explored, free to satisfy his curiosity concerning worlds he did not know.

In introducing Dr. Henry M. Baird, Mr. Williams said:

The connection of Franklin with France lay deeper than the accident of events or the needs of his native land. Of all our greater men in the last century or in

this, the expression and cast of his genius alone was Gallic. He shared with Voltaire the capacity for using the highest literary form to enlighten the humblest reader or confute the keenest partisan. In his journalism, he prefigured the homely familiarity and the familiar humor which is alike the might and the weakness, the strong tower and the open pitfall of the American newspaper in this century. But in all he wrote and in much that he did, he foreshadowed that apprehension and appreciation of form for wit's sake which yearly draws us as a nation nearer to the critical standards of France in art and in letters. The historian of France therefore approaches the diplomatic career of Franklin acquainted not only with the environment in which he discharged his great services, but aware of the men and the models, the method and habit of thought which profoundly influenced the conscious and unconscious development of Franklin from the man of business into the man of science, and from the man of science into the man of affairs. To the historian of the Huguenots, the chronicler of the great Cardinals, the deep and unsparing student of the causes which prepared in France the field in which Franklin won his last and closing triumphs, these triumphs have a meaning and interpretation lost on other men. I need not remind you that our next speaker ascends this platform with this special equipment for his work in treating of the diplomatic services of Franklin, and I feel equal honor and good fortune in introducing to you, as the last speaker of the evening, Dr. Henry M. Baird, of the University of the City of New York, who will speak upon

The Diplomatic Services of Benjamin Franklin.

I have been asked to address you on the subject of Dr. Franklin's diplomatic services—a department of activity in which our great compatriot, and the founder of this Society, conferred upon his country and upon humanity benefits not inferior to those by which, as a scientific discoverer, he brought the whole world into his debt.

In the address of welcome made to Benjamin Franklin, upon his return from his last mission to Europe, the Assembly of this Commonwealth, by the mouth of its Speaker, the Hon. John Bayard, greeted him with these words: "We are confident, sir, that we speak the sentiments of this whole country, when we say that your services in the public councils and negotiations have not only merited the thanks of the present generation, but will be recorded in the pages of history to your immortal honor." *

We are here, Mr. President, to set the seal of the concluding years of this nineteenth century to the fulfillment of the prophecy made over one hundred years ago, by the enthusiastic voice of Franklin's contemporaries.

The diplomatic services of Benjamin Franklin are naturally to be referred to two periods; and the dividing line is the outbreak of the American Revolution. In the first period, his efforts were directed towards England, and his aim was to obtain for his countrymen, as citizens of the great British empire, the acknowledgment of rights inalienably theirs by reason of their birth.

In the second period, the claims of the colonists of North America having been practically denied, the energies of his

* "The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin." Edited by John Bigelow (New York, 1887). ix, 248.

mind were turned in the direction of France, and his heroic and persistent exertions were put forth to secure, first, the recognition and help of that land, and then, with that help, the complete independence of the United States and their admission into the sisterhood of nations. Both departments of his activity, both fields of labor, elicited strenuous, concentrated, conscientious exercise of all his prodigious intellectual powers, and both were worthy of them. Yet viewing his diplomatic services as a whole, the latter part stands out prominent, as indeed the consummation of a life of singular utility to the public.

The English mission laid the foundation, broad and firm, of Franklin's fame as an able negotiator; his mission to the Continent reared on this abiding substructure a stately edifice adorned with imposing columns and entablature—in which, if I may be permitted to carry out the same figure, the aged philosopher's warm and enthusiastic attempt, in the name of humanity, to mitigate the horrors of all future wars, constituted the graceful cornice—a supreme and enduring tribute to the kindly instincts of his nature, of which it may truthfully be said: "*Finis coronat opus.*"

The richest and best fruits of man's intellectual and moral growth are found in the autumn of life, when the warm and mellowing rays of the sun have done their work, and nature gathers to itself the combined results of the entire year. Franklin's noble achievements as a diplomatist were accomplished in his later manhood and in his old age. He was past his fifty-first birthday when he sailed for England upon his first mission; he lacked less than six months of being four-score years old when he returned from his mission to France. The intervening twenty-eight years had been spent abroad in the service of his country, with the exception of two short intervals, the one of less than two years, the other of about eighteen months.

And what had he accomplished, when, with hair blanched by age, he at last returned to his native land and to the city of his choice, after so long an expatriation?

It is not with diplomacy, especially with services of the kind that Dr. Franklin rendered, as it is with the career of the military hero. If the great negotiator also has his triumphs, it is not always easy to lay the finger upon all the particular movements by means of which his bloodless victories are won. None the less do all his carefully laid but unobtrusive plans tend unerringly to the great result.

The first mission to England, though extending over not less than five years, is of subordinate interest to us now; because of the complete change that has since obliterated the political issues then regarded as momentous.

As agent for the colony of Pennsylvania, Dr. Franklin was sent to endeavor to obtain redress of wrongs sustained at the hands of the proprietaries. Subsequently appointed agent by other colonies—Massachusetts, Maryland, Georgia—his duty included vigilance respecting their interests also. The negotiation was long, tedious, dreary. We cannot tell how an obscure and unknown American, acting as a commissioner of distant provinces, would have fared at London in those times. Even Dr. Franklin, with all the great prestige of his scientific renown, did not find his position a bed of roses. The British government had evidently no very exalted opinion of the importance, present or prospective, of his gracious majesty's transatlantic plantations. Procrastination, proverbial vice of courts, had full sway. The months that Franklin was kept waiting for an answer to his petitions, were, doubtless, not altogether wasted by one who had mastered the rare art of putting the fragments, the very crumbs of time, to profitable use in the study of nature's hidden mysteries; and an abode in the

midst of the most learned and appreciative scholars England could boast, was not altogether destitute of attractions. Yet the diplomatic gain—the admission in particular of the right of the colonists to tax the lands of the proprietaries, soon to be proprietaries no more—seems trifling in view of the great events shortly to happen. And still the shrewd negotiator had gained something valuable. He had gained an insight into the cardinal doctrine of the current creed of the court. For had he not heard a minister of state, Lord Granville, propound the tenet that the king's instructions to his governors in America were the law of the land, and that the king himself must be regarded as "the legislator of the colonies?" This was a strange view to Dr. Franklin, who had always supposed that the right to make the laws was vested in the provincial assemblies, with the king's approval. And he significantly tells us: "His lordship's conversation having a little alarmed me as to what might be the sentiments of the court concerning us, I wrote it down as soon as I returned to my lodgings."*

It was not many years before it was the turn of others to take alarm at the practical assertion of the same dangerous heresy.

Respecting Franklin's second period of residence in London as a negotiator, it is not too much to say, that it brings into the clearest relief the rare capacity of the great American statesman. True, he did not attain the goal of his hopes. He was not successful in bringing the crown and people of Great Britain to a better mind, in settling the relations of the colonies to the mother country upon a lasting basis of justice and equality; in obviating the necessity of that sundering of ties which Dr. Franklin himself was reluctant to admit to be

* Autobiography (continuation) in Works, i, 296.

unavoidable, and in averting the dreadful resort to war between men of the same blood. But he did succeed in the next best thing, for he brought into the clear light of God's sunshine the righteousness of the struggle that was forced upon the colonies, by demonstrating the impossibility of obtaining redress for their wrongs from an obstinate king, from an unreasonable and prejudiced parliament, from a people that because they inhabited the mother country had fallen into the strange mistake of imagining themselves to be not subjects but governors.* For, as Dr. Franklin wrote to Lord Kames, "every man in England seems to consider himself as *a piece of a sovereign* over America; seems to jostle himself into the throne with the king and talks of *our subjects in the colonies*." †

Two scenes of dramatic interest illustrate this mission—both almost too familiar to students of history to need more than a passing notice, both, however, too characteristic and too essential to a clear understanding of the marked personality of the man who was their hero, to be left altogether without mention. The first of these is that remarkable examination before the House of Commons, so often described, so often the subject of unconcealed wonder on the part of historical writers, when for hours Dr. Franklin answered the various questions addressed to him both by friends and by political opponents, with a readiness, a calmness, an aptness, that have rarely been equaled, perhaps never excelled. While it seems too much to say that his replies to the interrogatories of his friends were altogether unpremeditated, the admirable promptness and skill with which he met the inquiries sprung upon him by adversaries, afford conclusive evidence of the breadth of his information upon American topics, and, not less, of the

* Works, iii, 486, 487.

† *Ib.*, iv, 2, 3.

singular equipoise of a mind so nicely balanced as to respond instantly to the demands of the moment, yet so firmly settled as to be proof against every attempt to disturb or disconcert.

If this famous episode was well calculated to exalt Dr. Franklin to the highest pinnacle of political reputation as yet attained by any American subject of the king of England, it scarcely surpassed in interest another occasion of the same eventful period.

It was in February, 1766, that Dr. Franklin appeared before the Commons to submit to the long but respectful examination of which I have just spoken. It was nearly eight years later (in January, 1774) that the venerable sage, the man whom the world of letters and the world of science delighted to honor, was subjected, in the presence of the Privy Council, to an attack as scurrilous as it was indecent. There is no need that I rehearse the familiar tale of the Hutchinson Letters and the storm their publication aroused. That Dr. Franklin's part in the transaction was fully justifiable, can scarcely fail, I think, to be the unanimous verdict of impartial men. But the fury of the party whose secrets were unmasked so unexpectedly, can scarcely be imagined. Of that fury the scandalous occurrence in the Cockpit of Westminster (on the 29th of January, 1774) was the direct and disgraceful consequence. The government's very purpose in summoning Dr. Franklin was to insult him; and had it been in the power of malice to affix ignominy to a great and virtuous man, the vituperative address of the solicitor-general, Mr. Wedderburn, might have compassed that end. As it was, during the whole time that this unseemly flood of abuse was poured upon his devoted head, Dr. Franklin, to use the account of an eye-witness (Dr. Bancroft), "stood conspicuously erect, without the smallest movement of any part of his body. The muscles of his face had

been previously composed, so as to afford a placid, tranquil expression of countenance, and he did not suffer the slightest alteration of it to appear during the continuance of the speech, in which he was so harshly and improperly treated." *

A man conscious of the integrity of his purpose and the innocence of his actions can well afford to wait for vindication. And Dr. Franklin had not very long to wait. Not quite a year had elapsed—it was Wednesday, the 1st of February, 1775—when Lord Sandwich, in opposing in the Upper House the conciliatory measure introduced by the Earl of Chatham, seeing Dr. Franklin a few feet distant leaning upon the bar, went out of his way to express his belief that the plan under consideration was not that of any British peer, but of a person whom he saw before him, one of the bitterest and most mischievous enemies the country had ever had. In reply to whom Lord Chatham, not content with accepting the sole responsibility for the authorship of the project, proceeded to eulogize the great philosopher in these memorable words: "I make no scruple to declare that, were I the first minister of this country, and had I the care of settling this momentous business, I should not be ashamed of publicly calling to my assistance a person so perfectly acquainted with the whole of American affairs as the gentleman alluded to, and so injuriously reflected on; one whom all Europe holds in high estimation for his knowledge and wisdom, and ranks with our Boyles and Newtons; who is an honor, not to the English nation only, but to human nature!"

"I found it harder," modestly remarks Dr. Franklin in reporting the incident, "I found it harder to stand this extravagant compliment than the preceding equally extravagant abuse, but

* Works, v, 311.

kept as well as I could an unconcerned countenance, as not conceiving it to relate to me." *

And what shall I say of the importance of the services of Benjamin Franklin at the court of Versailles?

His good American friends had contented themselves with a brief enjoyment of his society at home. Little more than a year after his return from London, they voted, in Congress assembled, his dispatch to Europe, this time to France, showing scant consideration for his three-score years and ten, or for any natural desire he might have for a longer furlough from the diplomatic service. Barely had he, as a representative of Pennsylvania, affixed his name to the Declaration of Independence, before he was chosen to discharge his new and responsible functions. He reached Nantes early in December, 1776. Before Christmas he was in Paris.

He came at a critical moment. It cannot be affirmed that, without the help of France, the thirteen American colonies would not ultimately have achieved their great purpose. There is much in a courage that will admit into its vocabulary no such word as failure. Stout hearts convinced of the righteousness of the cause for which they battle, possess a great reserve of power. Unflinching resolve has learned the secret of enlisting time and opportunity as allies, and when most prostrate rises, with Heaven's help, to renew a strife which in the end must be crowned with victory.

But the American contest would have been longer, more painful, more enduring in the injuries inflicted, had it not been for the kindly intervention of France. And that intervention Benjamin Franklin secured. Humanly speaking, there was no one else that could have secured it. He was the foremost American of his time; in fact, he was the only

* Works, v, 498.

American that could claim a world-wide reputation. Even Washington was little known in Europe. Younger than Franklin by twenty-six years, he had as yet accomplished little to bring to the notice of foreigners those transcendant qualities, that commanding personal character, which years of arduous war amid trials, discouragement, and even occasional defeat, were to put to the proof. But Franklin, the man of science, the brilliant discoverer in a new and attractive realm of investigation, was known by all. His name was upon all lips. The very fact that he had come to France to advocate the cause of the new American republic conciliated for that cause the favor of great and small. And with the favor came a conviction that the side Franklin espoused would be certain to win. For, changing somewhat Turgot's celebrated line, was it not self-evident that the hand that "snatched the thunderbolt from heaven" would prove competent to wrest "the sceptre from tyrants?" Thus it came to pass that soon, according to M. Lacretelle, "no one any longer conceived it possible to refuse fleets and an army to the countrymen of Franklin."* Or, as M. Mignet, most terse and philosophical of modern French historians, has put it, "The sight of Franklin, the severe simplicity of his dress, the refined kindliness of his manners, the alluring spell of his wit, his venerable appearance, his modest assurance, and his resplendent fame, brought the American cause altogether into fashion."†

But it was not solely, nor chiefly, the reputation already gained by Dr. Franklin, that made his mission to France so productive of good to his native land. There was a wide field for the exercise of his ingenuity, for the display of his shrewd

* "Histoire de la France pendant le dix-huitième siècle," v, 86.

† "Vie de Franklin, Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques de l'Institut de France," vii (1850), 396.

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common sense, and of both dexterity and tact, in those dark days when nothing reached Europe but reports of losses, retreats, disasters to the patriots. Money was to be obtained, and that from the coffers of a monarch himself well-nigh bankrupt. A great state must be induced to enter the strife upon the seas with the most formidable of maritime powers. A friendly shelter must be found in hospitable ports for American vessels that scoured the shores of Great Britain and brought in the prizes taken to be condemned and sold.

With the joyful news of the surrender of General Burgoyne came the first rays of sunshine, presage of the complete dispersion of the thick clouds hitherto enveloping the political skies. Then it was that the king of France definitely consented to enter upon a treaty of alliance with the United States. That was indeed, as M. Guizot justly styles it, "a triumph of Franklin's diplomatic ability."* Henceforth, if the great American envoy's labors did not diminish, if instead they rather increased as the slow years of the contest dragged along, at least the firm conviction of approaching triumph made tolerable even that enormous load of responsibility which rested upon his shoulders. Others, it is true, were associated with him, at the Hague, in Madrid, and elsewhere—John Adams, John Jay, and others, whose services are deserving of everlasting remembrance. They, too, displayed true patriotism, whole-souled devotion to the cause of liberty, and rare skill in negotiation. They might not have enjoyed the opportunities for training in the school of diplomacy which had fallen to the lot of the British envoys with whom they were called upon to deal, but they proved themselves adepts in the science of persuasion and generally discomfited their rivals. As Dr. Franklin somewhat quaintly states it, not without a tinge of

* "Histoire de France," v, 346.

raillery, when writing to his English correspondent, William Strahan, once more his friend, after the conclusion of the war: "Your contempt of our understandings, in comparison with your own, appeared to be not much better founded than that of our courage, if we may judge by this circumstance, that, in whatever court of Europe, a Yankee negotiator appeared, the wise British minister was routed, put in a passion, picked a quarrel with your friends, and was sent home with a flea in his ear."* And if good Jonathan Shipley, Bishop of St. Asaph, had primary reference to the ability of Franklin himself in dealing with the French and English ministers, the remark held good also of his worthy associates: "The event has shown that, in their own arts, you were not inferior to the ablest of them."†

Yet, while others were associated with him in the honorable work, and right nobly discharged their part, it was after all, Dr. Franklin that was chiefly looked to to represent the United States in Europe entire, as it was he alone that could sustain the credit of the country when Congress in its desperation was issuing drafts which it provided the envoys with no means of honoring, and when the advances of money imperatively needed for the maintenance of the American cause must be wrung by judicious insistance from a government, not so much reluctant, as unable to meet all the demands upon its purse made by its impecunious ally.

At last perseverance met with its reward. The king of England was compelled to acknowledge the autonomy of his revolted colonies, and, on the 30th of November, 1782, in conjunction with John Adams, John Jay, and Henry Laurens, Dr. Franklin signed the provisional articles. Ten months later, he

* Letter from Passy, 19 August, 1784, Works, ix, 53.

† Letter from Twyford, 27 November, 1784, Works, ix, 280.

was associated with Adams and Jay in concluding the definitive treaty.

To the consummation of the hopes of all patriotic Americans, the wise efforts of Franklin and his fellow-diplomatists had contributed as truly, perhaps as substantially, as had the martial exploits of Washington and his companions in arms. And it is as honorable to the wisdom as it is to the reverent spirit of those great men, that both Franklin and Washington ascribed their success to the favor of God who is the friend and avenger of the oppressed. I quoted, a moment ago, the somewhat boastful terms in which Dr. Franklin was pleased to describe to William Strahan the triumphs of American diplomacy at European courts. I must be permitted here to reproduce these sentences by which he next proceeds to qualify what might well otherwise be viewed as too arrogant a claim. "But, after all, my dear friend," he says, "do not imagine that I am vain enough to ascribe our success to any superiority in any of those points. I am too well acquainted with all the springs and levers of our machine, not to see that our human means were unequal to our undertaking, and that, if it had not been for the justice of our cause and the consequent interposition of Providence, in which we had faith, we must have been ruined. If I had ever before been an atheist, I should now have been convinced of the being and government of a Deity! It is He who abases the proud and favors the humble. May we never forget His goodness to us, and may our future conduct manifest our gratitude." *

It cannot but be regarded as an interesting circumstance, that Dr. Franklin's last diplomatic service should have been rendered in the interest of our common humanity; that in the treaty with Prussia, which it was his last official duty to sign

* Works, ix, 53.

on the eve of his departure from Paris, were embodied those philanthropic provisions that are destined, we hope, to mark the era of a higher and purer civilization.

Much as Dr. Franklin had had to do with the prosecution of war, forced thereto by the circumstances of the hour, he was preëminently a man of peace. "I am of opinion," he once wrote to the banker, Le Grand, "I am of opinion that there never was a bad peace, nor a good war."* He hoped great things from the spread of intelligence and especially of mutual forbearance. Hence he rejoiced when Louis XVI, by his edict of toleration (1787), took the first step toward undoing the mischief wrought by Louis XIV's gigantic blunder in revoking the Edict of Nantes. "The *arrêt* in favor of the *non catholiques*," he wrote from Philadelphia, "gives great pleasure here, not only from its present advantages, but as it is a good step towards general toleration, and to the abolishing, in time, all party spirit among Christians, and the mischiefs that have so long attended it. Thank God, the world is growing wiser and wiser, and as by degrees men are convinced of the folly of wars for religion, for dominion or for commerce, they will be happier and happier."†

Meanwhile, as the prospect of the entire abolition of war was yet very dim and shadowy, Dr. Franklin regarded it an end well worth laboring for to reduce as much as possible the attendant horrors. Two of these—*privateering* and the *cruel treatment of prisoners of war*—he set himself to remove.

He had written frequently and decidedly in condemnation of privateering, which he stigmatized as a remnant of the ancient piracy, and argued that though accidentally beneficial to particular persons, it was far from profitable to the nation

* Works, ix, 298.

† Letter to M. Le Veillard, Philadelphia, 8 June, 1788. Works, ix, 481.

that authorized it. It was a lottery in which some might draw prizes, but the whole expense exceeded by much the aggregate of individual gains. Besides, in addition to the national loss of so many men during the time they have been engaged in robbing, the agents in the nefarious work become unfit for any sober business after a peace, and "serve only to increase the number of highwaymen and housebreakers." The financial disaster that sooner or later overtakes even the most prosperous of those taking part in it, Franklin regarded as "a just punishment for their having wantonly and unfeelingly ruined many honest, innocent traders and their families, whose subsistence was employed in serving the common interests of mankind."*

In accordance with these humane views, Dr. Franklin desired to insert in the treaty of peace with Great Britain an article abolishing privateering in all future wars. To this end he drew up a proposal, which he enclosed to his old friend, Richard Oswald, the British commissioner, shortly after they had signed the "provisional articles." In the accompanying letter he wrote: "I send you also another paper which I once read to you separately. It contains a proposition for improving the law of nations, by prohibiting the plundering of unarmed and usefully employed people. I rather *wish* than *expect* that it will be adopted. But I think it may be offered with a better grace by a country that is likely to suffer least and gain most by continuing the ancient practice, which is our case, as the American ships, laden only with the gross productions of the earth, cannot be so valuable as yours, filled with sugars or manufactures. It has not yet been considered by my colleagues, but if you should think or find that it might be

*Propositions relative to privateering communicated to Mr. Oswald, Passy, 14 January, 1783, Works, viii, 246. See also, *ib.*, ix, 88, 89.

acceptable on your side, I would try to get it inserted in the general treaty. *I think it will do honor to the nations that establish it.*" *

Dr. Franklin was right, but, finding no favor with the government of Great Britain, the proposal was declined. Its author, however, did not despair. A few years later he had the satisfaction of being able to write to M. Leroy: "I rejoice to hear that the difference between the emperor and your country [France] is accommodated, for I love peace. You will see in the treaty we have made with Prussia some marks of my endeavors to lessen the calamities of future wars." Accordingly we find near the close of that document, signed as I have said by Dr. Franklin, as one of the three commissioners appointed by Congress, just before his return, an article—it is the twenty-third—almost identical in its phraseology with that which he had, two years before, offered to Mr. Oswald for consideration. In it occur these memorable words: "And all merchant and trading vessels employed in exchanging the products of different places and thereby rendering the necessaries, conveniences and comforts of human life more easy to be obtained and more general, shall be allowed to pass free and unmolested; and neither of the contracting powers shall grant or issue any commissions to any private armed vessels, empowering them to take or destroy such trading vessels or interrupt such commerce." †

Not only so, but, in a succeeding article, the attempt is made further to mitigate the sufferings entailed by war by provisions of the most kindly character, stipulating in great detail what shall be the treatment of prisoners. They shall not be sent

* Works, viii, 245.

† Text in "Treaties and Conventions concluded between the United States of America and other powers since July 4, 1776" (Washington, 1889), 905, 906.

to distant and inclement countries, to the East Indies or to any other parts of Asia or Africa, nor confined in dangerous prison-ships or prisons, nor put into irons, nor bound, nor otherwise restrained in the use of their limbs. Both officers and common soldiers shall be furnished with daily rations equal in quality and quantity to the rations given to soldiers and officers of the same rank in the army of the captors; and their quarters and barracks shall be not less roomy and comfortable than those enjoyed by the troops of the party in whose power they are.

Still further to invest these new improvements in international jurisprudence with all possible sanctity, the following clear statement is made, every line of which bears the marks of Dr. Franklin's clear and judicious pen: "And it is declared, that neither the pretense that war dissolves all treaties, nor any other whatever, shall be considered as annulling or suspending this and the next preceding article; but, on the contrary, that the state of war is precisely that for which they are provided, and during which they are to be as sacredly observed as the most acknowledged articles in the law of nature or nations."*

This was an appropriate ending of Dr. Franklin's diplomatic services, a real gain for humanity achieved by a philosopher in whose eyes no acquisition, either of his own or of others, was so precious as that by means of which the common store of comfort and happiness was enhanced. Again it had been the great fame of the founder of this Society that insured him success in the field of international negotiation. For with such a man the States and monarchs of the Old World deemed it an honor to treat. The ambassador of Gustavus III, of Sweden, was not only directed to make advances for a treaty

* Treaties and Conventions, 906.

with the United States—Sweden being the first power in Europe which voluntarily offered its friendship without being solicited—but was charged to tell Dr. Franklin that the king had so great esteem for him that it would be a particular satisfaction to his majesty to have such a transaction with him. Dr. Franklin is himself our informant, nor does he conceal the pardonable gratification which he felt at hearing the flattering assurance, adding: "I have perhaps some vanity in repeating this; but I think, too, that it is right that Congress should know it, and judge if any use may be made of the reputation of a citizen for the public service." *

The diplomatic career of Dr. Franklin closes with the year 1785, when he went home not indeed to enjoy rest, as he had fondly hoped, but to a change of scene and of employment. And here, in the city of his adoption, death overtook him rich in years, in honors, and, what he prized more, in the memory of valuable benefits conferred upon his country and upon mankind. Such men are few in any age; their number is not great in all the combined centuries that together make up the short life of our race upon this planet.

It is only meet that we should cherish their names with respect, and gratefully hand down to posterity the story of their honorable and meritorious deeds.

Upon the close of the last speech, Mr. Williams said:

I am instructed by the Committee, which I represent in closing this commemoration, publicly to express the appreciation of the Society for the attendance of its

* Franklin to Secretary Livingston, Passy, 25 June, 1782, Works, viii, 109.

guests and for the words of its invited speakers. A hundred years ago, the honor and commemoration of Franklin at the end of a century was confidently expected by our predecessors, whose example we follow to-night with this tribute in memory of his death. With increasing confidence, with enlarging hope for the future, in abiding certainty that whatever another century may bring it can add only increasing fame to his memory, we commit our discharge of this duty to our successors a century hence, in the complete and comfortable assurance, that their commemoration, like our own, will find assembled again the descendants of Franklin, this Society, its members, its invited guests, and eloquent voices to commemorate his memory and again record his fame.